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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DOMESTIC COLLECTION DIVISION

THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE.
REPORT CLASS C O N F I D E N T I A L--WNINTEL
COUNTRY LAOS
SUBJECT 1. POISON GAS ATTACKS ON HMONG TRIBE MEMBERS
2. "BLACK RAIN" LETHAL CW AGENT

SOURCE [redacted]

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SUMMARY - FOUR ATTACKS USING POISON GAS WERE MADE ON HMONG TRIBE MEMBERS DURING FEBRUARY 1978 IN THE AREA

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OF THE CONFLUENCE OF THE NAM THENG AND NAM KA RIVERS IN SOUTH CENTRAL LAOS. THE POISON GAS WAS DELIVERED BY ~~ROCKETS FIRED FROM~~ SINGLE-ENGINED, PROPELLER-DRIVEN, RECONNAISSANCE-TYPE AIRCRAFT. THE AIRCRAFT FLEW FIRST AT ALTITUDES OF APPROXIMATELY ONE THOUSAND METERS, AND LATER UP TO THREE THOUSAND METERS AFTER ENCOUNTERING ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE FROM THE GROUND. THE POISON GAS ROCKETS WERE DISTINGUISHED BY YELLOW OR RED SMOKE, VISIBLE BOTH AT THE TIME OF FIRING AND UPON IMPACT AND EXPLOSION. SYMPTOMS OF THE GAS INCLUDED SEVERE RESPIRATORY DISTRESS, FOLLOWED BY VOMITING AND SEVERE DIARRHEA. CASUALTIES OF THE OBSERVED ATTACKS INCLUDED FOUR OR FIVE CHILDREN WHO DIED FROM THE AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE VOMITING AND DIARRHEA. ALL ATTACKS TOOK PLACE DURING CLEAR WEATHER.

1. FOUR POISON GAS ATTACKS INVOLVING AN APPARENT INCAPACITATING AGENT WERE LAUNCHED BY ROCKET FROM AIRPLANES IN THE AREA OF THE CONFLUENCE OF THE NAM THENG AND NAM KA RIVERS IN SOUTH CENTRAL LAOS DURING FEBRUARY 1978. THE FIRST ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED FROM A RECONNAISSANCE-TYPE SINGLE-ENGINED, PROPELLER-DRIVEN AIRCRAFT OF THE TYPE USED FORMERLY BY THE FORCES OF GENERAL VANG P A O AS ARTILLERY AND AIR-STRIKE SPOTTER AIRCRAFT. THE ATTACKING AIRPLANES, USUALLY TWO IN NUMBER, FIRED EITHER FOUR OR TWO-ROCKET SALVOES. THE ROCKETS FIRED DURING ATTACKS WHICH UTILIZED SALVOES OF FOUR ROCKETS MADE EXPLOSIONS APPROXIMATELY THE SIZE OF THOSE PRODUCED BY 81-MILLIMETER MORTAR SHELLS. THE ROCKETS USED IN TWO-ROCKET SALVOES MADE LARGER EXPLOSIONS. THE POISON GAS RELEASED BY THE ROCKETS WAS COLORED EITHER RED OR YELLOW. THE RED-COLORED GAS WAS THE MUCH STRONGER AGENT OF THE TWO. THE AIRPLANES MADE ONE PASS BEFORE RETURNING TO FIRE THE POISON GAS ROCKETS IF THE AREA WAS OPEN OR FAMILIAR TO THE PILOTS, BUT ON SOME ATTACKS THE AIRCRAFT MADE FOUR OR FIVE PASSES BEFORE FIRING THE GAS ROCKETS. FIRING PASSES WERE MADE ONCE, AND ON SOME OCCASIONS TWICE, BUT NO MORE THAN TWICE DURING ANY GIVEN ATTACK. FOR THE FIRST ATTACK, THE PLANES FLEW AT AN ALTITUDE OF ABOUT ONE THOUSAND METERS, BUT LATER ATTACKS WERE LAUNCHED FROM ALTITUDES OF ABOUT THREE THOUSAND METERS. SMALL ARMS FIRE DIRECTED AGAINST THE ATTACKING AIRCRAFT WAS PROBABLY THE REASON FOR THE LATER HIGHER-ALTITUDE ATTACKS.

2. THREE OF THE FOUR ATTACKS TOOK PLACE WITHIN A TWO-WEEK TIME SPAN DURING FEBRUARY 1978. THE FOURTH ATTACK WAS MADE ABOUT TEN-

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TO-FOURTEEN DAYS LATER. TWO ATTACKS WERE MADE DURING THE EARLY MORNING, APPROXIMATELY 0600-0900 HOURS. ONE ATTACK WAS MADE IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON, ABOUT 1300 HOURS, AND ONE ATTACK TOOK PLACE IN MID-AFTERNOON. THE WEATHER DURING ALL THE ATTACKS WAS CLEAR AND HOT. THREE AIRPLANES MADE THE FIRST ATTACK, AND FOR THE SUCCEEDING THREE ATTACKS TWO AIRCRAFT WERE USED, ALL OF THE SAME TYPE.

3. THREE OF THE ATTACKS OBSERVED INVOLVED THE USE OF ROCKETS WHICH EXPLODED TO RELEASE CLOUDS OF RED-COLORED POISON GAS. ONE ATTACK INVOLVED YELLOW CLOUDS OF GAS, WHICH SEEMED TO BE WEAKER IN EFFECT THAN THE RED GAS, BUT THE EFFECTS OF BOTH WERE SIMILAR. THERE WAS ONE ATTACK INVOLVING FOUR RED ROCKETS, BUT THE OTHER THREE ATTACKS INVOLVED RED, YELLOW AND WHITE (HIGH EXPLOSIVE, ANTIPERSONNEL) ROCKETS. THE WHITE ROCKETS USED WERE TO MARK CONCENTRATIONS OF PEOPLE FOR LATER FIRING OF POISON GAS ROCKETS. THE GAS ROCKETS WERE FIRED ANYWHERE THERE WAS A LARGE CONCENTRATION OF PEOPLE. THE RADIUS OF EFFECTS FROM THE POISON GAS APPEARED TO BE ABOUT 1.5 KILOMETERS. THE ROCKETS CARRYING THE POISON GAS TRAILED EITHER RED OR YELLOW SMOKE WHEN THEY WERE FIRED FROM THE PLANE, AND WHEN THEY EXPLODED ON IMPACT THE GAS CLOUD RELEASED WAS THE SAME COLOR (EITHER RED OR YELLOW).

4. THE EFFECTS OF BOTH THE YELLOW AND RED ROCKETS WERE THE SAME, BUT THE EFFECTS FROM THE RED GAS SEEMED MUCH STRONGER AND LASTED LONGER THAN THOSE INDUCED BY THE YELLOW GAS. BOTH AGENTS MADE THE VICTIMS FEEL AS IF THEIR BODY WAS GOING TO BLOW UP; SEVERE COUGHING YIELDED BLOOD, THE THROAT FELT HOT AND IT HURT TO SWALLOW. THESE SYMPTOMS WERE FOLLOWED BY THE EYES TURNING YELLOW AS IF THE VICTIM HAD JAUNDICE, THE VISION BECOMING BLURRED, AND THE NOSE TINGLING AS IF HOT PEPPER HAD BEEN INHALED. THE VICTIMS "SAW STARS", THE EYES FELT WARM, AND THERE WAS MUCH WEEPING, WITH LATER A CRUSTY MUCOUS FORMING IN THE CORNERS OF THE EYES. THE VICTIMS COULD SEE, BUT NOT WELL, AND IT HURT TO BREATHE. THE VICTIMS' CHEST FELT AS THOUGH IT WERE BEING CRUSHED, AND BREATHING CAUSED A SHARP PAIN, LIKE A KNIFE IN THE RIBS. THE HEART BEAT VERY FAST. HEARING WAS AFFECTED BY A LOSS IN ACUITY WHICH LASTED ABOUT FIVE DAYS TO A WEEK IF MEDICINE WAS TAKEN; OTHERWISE THE EFFECT ON HEARING LASTED FOR TWO WEEKS. CONTACT WITH THE AGENT ALSO CAUSED THE TEETH TO FEEL LOOSE AND THE GUMS TO SMELL ROTTEN. THESE SYMPTOMS WERE FOLLOWED BY SEVERE DIARRHEA, INVOLVING EPISODES PERHAPS FIVE TO SIX TIMES A DAY. THERE WERE

END OF MESSAGE

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